

take this opportunity to learn more about the culture and important contributions Hispanics have made and continue to make to the United States.

It is fitting that what originally started out as Hispanic Heritage Week in September of 1968 has been lengthened to a month-long celebration of the culture and contributions of Hispanics to the American experience. This is in large part a reflection of the growing prominence of Hispanics in all sectors of American society. As a U.S. Senator, though, I am especially interested and encouraged by the growing role Hispanics are playing in our Nation's government.

Hispanics have a long history of service to the United States as elected officials. The first Hispanic to serve in the Congress was Delegate Joseph Marion Hernandez of the Territory of Florida in 1822. The first Hispanic elected from a State was Romualdo Pacheco of California, who won his race by one vote in 1876. Dennis Chavez of New Mexico became the first Hispanic Senator after being elected in 1936.

In recent years, Hispanic women have also successfully been elected to the Congress. In 1988, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN became both the first Cuban-American and first Hispanic woman elected to serve in the House of Representatives. Four years later, she was joined in the House by LYDIA VELÁSQUEZ, the first Puerto Rican woman, and LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, the first Mexican-American woman. I am pleased that the number of Hispanics now serving in the House of Representatives has more than doubled in the years from 1984 to 2000, from 9 to 21, and I look forward to working with Hispanic colleagues in the Senate as well.

Government is not the only area where Hispanics are breaking new ground. Hispanics are enriching all aspects of our Nation's cultural and economic life. Hispanic entrepreneurs, who open up small businesses at a higher rate than that of the general population, fuel our economy and create jobs. Hispanic writers, such as Isabel Allende, are not only enriching our literature, but are also redefining the American experience through their novels, such as *Portrait of Sepia* and *Daughter of Fortune*. Hispanic labor leaders, following in the footsteps of Cesar Chavez, continue to fight for livable wages and safe working conditions. Roberto Clemente, an athlete and humanitarian, who died while delivering much-needed relief supplies to Central America, was the first Hispanic elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame following a stellar career with the Pittsburgh Pirates. Hispanics have also served honorably in every military engagement since the Revolutionary War—38 have earned the military's highest decoration for their bravery, the Medal of Honor. Louis Caldera, the eldest son of Mexican immigrants, followed in this tradition of military service and became the first Hispanic Secretary of the Army from 1998–2001.

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, let us take the time to learn more about these and other Hispanic leaders. But let us also take a moment to recognize the many hardworking Hispanic members of our own communities as well. Let us welcome them when they are new arrivals and ensure that our diversity remains one of our greatest strengths. Their contributions serve to enrich our common culture and we are all the better for it. The truest testimony of our greatness as a nation is the enduring power of the American Dream and the sacrifices people everywhere are willing to make to attain it.●

#### CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION FOR INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL 309

● Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the centennial of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 309 in Collinsville, IL. On September 11, 1902, eleven electrical workers from my hometown of East St. Louis, IL committed to support a united labor effort by forming their own local chapter. Despite the dangers in developing the electrical industry, the group continued its work and advanced to become highly trained and skilled journeymen.

The group has grown from its eleven original members to 1,100 and has helped shape the Metro-east and surrounding areas of southern Illinois. Local 309 has been a leader in the electrical industry, with advancements in training, organizing, market recovery, and member services. Its apprentice program has been registered in the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Apprenticeship and has been producing skilled and experienced workers for the past 100 years. It continues to show its commitment to the education of its members in this, its centennial year.

Through their expertise and solidarity, today's members of Local 309 continue the legacy of their founders by uniting the electrical workers of southern Illinois under the common goals of fairness, justice, and leadership in their field.

Congratulations to the members of Local 309 on their centennial celebration. Best wishes for the next 100 years.●

#### NATIONAL KIDS VOTING WEEK

● Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to recognize Kids Voting USA and its efforts to educate our children about civic participation, democracy, and the electoral process. Kids Voting USA is an organization that began in my State, but now reaches nearly five million students nationwide.

What began as a fishing trip to Costa Rica by three Arizona businessmen has blossomed into an organization that in-

volves 9,000 schools, 200,000 teachers, 80,000 volunteers, and countless sponsors and donors. With 38 States and more than 140 communities across the Nation participating, Kids Voting USA teaches students from kindergarten through high school about the importance of civic participation and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Through an acclaimed, interactive core of service-based curricula, young people gain the knowledge, skills, and motivation for democratic living.

Combined with a civics education, students participate in local and national elections in communities across the country. Kids Voting USA enables students to visit official polls on election day, accompanied by a parent or guardian, to cast a ballot that replicates the official ballot. During the last national election, more than 1.5 million students voted as part of the Kids Voting USA program. In last year's local elections students actively participated in over 114 cities, counties, and school districts.

This year, National Kids Voting Week is September 11–17, and will coincide with the inauguration of National Civic Participation Week. It will be a week that highlights programs and activities that lead to greater participation in elections and the political process. As we reflect on the events of the last year, National Kids Voting Week will celebrate the vibrant and important Kids Voting program by focusing on the hopes and dreams of young citizens. I would like to recognize Kids Voting USA and all it has done to promote the future of democracy by engaging families, schools, and communities in the election process.●

#### MERCK MECTIZAN DONATION PROGRAM

● Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 15th anniversary of one of the largest and most successful public/private partnerships in health care in the developing world, the Merck MECTIZAN Donation Program. Today, this program provides hope to millions, and I am proud to pay tribute to Merck & Co., a leading New Jersey corporation, for its work on this critical issue.

On October 21, 1987, Merck & Co., Inc. announced plans to donate MECTIZAN, ivermectin, a medicine Merck discovered to combat river blindness, for as long as it might be needed, wherever needed. Onchocerciasis, "river blindness", is a leading cause of blindness in the developing world. It is a debilitating and disfiguring disease, affecting millions in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Central and South America and Yemen in the Middle East. The disease, which has infected 18 million people and has left an estimated one million people visually impaired or blind, is caused by parasitic worms that infiltrate, multiply, and spread throughout the human body.